



## CONTACT

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 17, 2019

### **Sleep-related fatalities leading cause of death for Kansas infants 1-month to 1-year:**

The KIDS Network continues intervention efforts to reduce these deaths.

(Wichita, Kan.) – The most recent annual report from the Kansas State Child Death Review Board (SCDRB) reports that 75% of sleep-related deaths occurred in an unsafe sleep location. The board notes the large number of infants who sleep in less than ideal circumstances may have been prevented had the infant been in a safe-sleep environment. Furthermore, the rate of African American infant deaths is two to three times higher than their Caucasian counterparts while the Hispanic rate of infant mortality has been on the rise.

While the root causes of infant mortality are complex, the high incidence of infant deaths can be attributed to stress, poverty, lower education levels and higher teen pregnancy rates. Confronting the complex factors that contribute to infant mortality needs a collaborative and committed community effort to bridge these gaps.

"Too many babies are dying, which means too many families are grieving" says Christy Schunn, Executive Director of Kansas Infant Death and SIDS (KIDS) Network. "While we have made progress over the last ten years, the KIDS Network remains committed to working with partners across Kansas to continue intervention efforts to decrease infant mortality and protect the lives of our state's youngest and most vulnerable population."

To address these issues, the KIDS Network supported in part by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment developed a way to train maternal and infant health providers to educate parents and caregivers on the American Academy of Pediatrics Safe Sleep policy. Health-care providers, health departments and social workers from around the state will attend the KIDS Network Safe Sleep Instructor training held in Wichita Sept. 19 and 20 at the Sedgwick County Child Advocacy Center. The Kansas Department for Children and Families, which recently implemented the Universal Infant Referral policy requiring child protection workers to assess the infant's sleep environment using guidance from the KIDS Network and Safe Kids Kansas, will join them.

Other ongoing efforts include:

**Safe Sleep Community Baby Showers**, hosted in partnership with the Wichita Black Nurses Association, will be held on Saturday, Oct. 12, 2019, to promote Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness month. Community Baby Showers are an interactive and educational event for expectant parents and their support people to learn the ABCs of Safe Sleep—all babies should sleep **A**lone, on their **B**acks, and in **C**lutter-free **C**rib. The pregnant women who attend the shower and receive the safe sleep training will receive a free portable crib and a wearable blanket, based

on availability. Do you know someone who could benefit? Encourage them to attend the Safe Sleep Community Baby Shower. Hour-long sessions begin every 15 minutes from 11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. at South Central Boys and Girls Club, 2400 N. Opportunity Drive, Wichita, Kan.

KIDS Network and Café con Leche will collaborate on Saturday, Oct. 19, to host a Spanish Community Baby Shower during the larger community event at North High School, 1437 N. Rochester St., Wichita. Sessions begin at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m.

The KIDS Network is a nonprofit agency serving individuals who have been touched by the tragedy of infant death or SIDS in Kansas and those individuals or organizations who strive to reduce the risk of infant deaths by providing supportive services, community education, professional training and supporting associated research.

### **Characteristics of the SIDS deaths in Kansas**

- 96% had one or more elements of unsafe sleep
- 76% were not sleeping in a crib/bassinet
  - 84% of these had a crib or bassinet in the home
- 60% were sleeping in an adult bed
  - 73% of these were co-bedding
- 4% were sleeping on a couch, while co-bedding
- 52% were documented as not being placed on the back to sleep (recommended position)
- 72% were less than 4 months old

(source: *State Child Death Review Board 2018 Annual Report* <http://bit.ly/2zwopGB>)

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